

they would do was to control aircraft on the carrier that was with them in case the carrier was told to support the invasion.

So I caught up on all the things that had happened, even though the logs were destroyed, the JCS files still were alive and had all the information in them.

Q: Just a question on that. As you say, it was thought that they were all destroyed, as a result of that meeting in the White House when they were asked to turn them in, but they were not actually destroyed?

Adm. M.: No, because the chairman of the JCS didn't know what he had in his files and when he gave orders, he gave orders to the services and forgot to give them to his own file system, so the JCS copies were still there. On frequent occasions, I drew these papers because I began to work papers for the next Cuban crisis coming up when the Soviets tried to and did insert missiles into Cuba. That was my area, so, again, I used to go down to CinCLant quite frequently to talk to the operators and planners and see the Atlantic Fleet staff because they were the ones who did the actual execution and I wanted to make sure I wasn't giving them orders to do something they couldn't do.

Many of the jobs I had concerning Cuba were planning

Vice Admiral William Mack, USN (Ret) interviewed by Dr. Jeth T. Macer, Jr., on 28 March, 1979

for the invasion of Cuba, if it were to take place, and let the general public know that a tremendous plan was put forward to invade Cuba, involving actually moving Marines through the canal in transports, stacking up hundreds of aircraft at Opalocka air base in Florida, and a good part of this was to be preceded by covert operations which were of course the province of what's called SACSA. I use the word SACSA, which was the abbreviation for this office I was in, special assistant for counterinsurgency.

SACSA had the responsibility for planning the covert operations that were to precede this sort of thing, and they involved equipping a large airplane with a television broadcast system and loudspeakers. This was to be put over Cuba and it was arranged that it could transmit television pictures to Cuba, which would appear on television screens on a different channel. As a matter of fact, this was used in Vietnam at a later date. Before we put television stations in there, we used this equipment that we put together for Cuba. It involved inserting various agents in Cuba through the CIA, so I used to go out to see CIA and liaison with them to pick out where we wanted various agents put and what we wanted them to do. In other words, what the military side versus the political wanted the agents to do.

We had to arrange safe areas for aviators, in case they invaded and the aviators came down in Cuba and they

wouldn't know where to go. So we'd insert agents and provide places for the aviators to go.

Among the things I had to do was to write the president's speech which he was to give. We spent two or three nights and days doing that, General Krulak and I, then sending it over to the special group CI where the president looked at it. Whether it was because he didn't like what we wrote or whatever happened, his speech was only about half of what we wrote. He put his own words into it.

That was the range of duties going on at this time. Then, when the actual operation started, with our destroyers actually blockading and all that, blockading the Cuban area, and stopping the Soviet missile ships coming in, the Joint Staff went to a sort of general quarters operation, where many had to be there all night. So I was actually in our section there day and night for about ten days. We had to be in the building, so we'd sleep on the desk and eat peanuts out of a machine. There was no way of getting any food down in the Joint Staff, so for about ten days we were there all the time, communicating with CinCLantFlt. Occasionally, I'd leave to go to Fort Bragg and talk to the special group that was going to be inserted into Cuba, or out to Langley to talk to CIA, but most of the time I was in the Pentagon for about ten days during the time this operation was going on.

Q: It must have dragged you down physically?

Adm. M.: Well, I was a little tired, but it's not as bad as going to sea in a destroyer with ice all around. I had an air mattress on the deck and -

Q: How was it working with General Krulak?

Adm. M.: General Krulak was a very vigorous person, a perfectionist. He wrote and spoke English very well but he liked to put his own little phrases into something. When I was talking about writing the president's speech, there was no end to it. I'd write his speech, send it in to General Krulak, and he'd send it back with corrections, insertions, and changes. I'd rewrite it and send it back and he'd send it back again. About the fourth or fifth time, I recognized things that I'd put in and he had changed, then he wanted to change it back to what it was before. There was absolutely no way of finishing this speech and we never did finish it until about an hour before it went to the White House. He just took the last draft he had and took it over. He wrote very well himself and he spoke very well, but he liked to use unusual phrases, unusual wording and various kinds of syntax which were not normal in the military system, or in any other system!

He had a great rapport with Bobbie Kennedy and General Taylor, and the president, and Mr. McNamara.

Q: That originated with the PT boats, didn't it?

Adm. M.: I don't know where it came from.

Q: I think so.

Adm. M.: I really have no idea how it happened, but it was evident at this time.

Then, of course, what happened after that was that the Cuban thing subsided and the last months I was in this job Vietnam became very, very important and was expanding all the time.

General Krulak used to go out with a team that Mr. McNamara headed to survey the situation in Vietnam. He'd go out about once every three weeks. He'd come back and he'd have a large group of papers to work for the Joint Staff when he came back; things Mr. McNamara wanted. For instance, we would do such things as expand the language capability of the Vietnamese language school by ten times, and then, two weeks later, by another ten times, and we'd expand the training facilities for training special teams to go out to Vietnam to do all sorts of things from building buildings to raising hogs.

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the White House used, at least Bobbie Kennedy and others, they didn't always do what they thought was indicated by the facts. They used what they called intuition and so forth in making hard decisions. I guess he thought he was entitled to that, too.

Q: What did you think in the Cuban missile crisis and beyond that, what did you think of this developing practice of having decisions, operational decisions, come directly from the White House to the fleet and elsewhere?

Adm. M.: Well, it was obviously a very poor way of doing things.

Q: Was it inevitable in terms of modern communications?

Adm. M.: I think that's probably what does it now and I'll go into this later on in my Seventh Fleet operations to show you some examples of how bad it was. It was terrible. I don't know much about the famous problem between Admiral Anderson and Mr. McNamara regarding their confrontation in flag plot, although I used to go to the flag plot quite frequently to find out what was going on when it was my job to be liaison between Admiral Anderson and the Joint Staff regarding Cuban problems. I just happened not to be there on that famous occasion when apparently one of the plots showed a U.S. destroyer out of position. Mr.

McNamara questioned it and Admiral Anderson is reported to have said, in effect, "That's my problem," and that started it. I wasn't there at that particular time.

Q: Thinking of that period with the missile crisis, were you people concerned at all with the publicity that was being given to the buildup of the Russians in Cuba by Senator Keating? Did this concern you at all?

Adm. M.: I don't think it did because it was sort of an outside political factor. We were more involved with what was actually going on. To have him talking about it didn't matter.

Q: But it was publicizing the situation and it hadn't been publicized up to that moment?

Adm. M.: You're talking about the buildup in our country?

Q: Almost daily he was speaking on the floor of the Senate and talking about the missiles coming in.

Adm. M.: What the Soviets were doing?

Q: Yes.

Adm. M.: He began to talk a little later on about what we



were doing, supposedly highly secret, about moving troops and moving aircraft and people from Bragg and Hawaii. Actually, getting ready to invade Cuba is what we were doing, and he began to talk about that.

It didn't bother us too much what he was saying because we thought this was probably good. It would condition the people of the country to the fact that we had a severe problem here, and it would make it easier if we had to go to war or mobilize or something else. So what he was saying really didn't bother us at all.

Q: Were you concerned about his sources?

Adm. M.: No, not really. This is a peculiar problem. You see, Congress, a congressman does not have security clearance. He can see almost anything if he demands it. It just depends upon what the military side will let him see. If you let him see something, he can go ahead and reveal it and never be criticized for it or prosecuted.

Q: He's immune?

Adm. M.: That's right. The only thing that can happen to him is censure by the Senate or the House. So he doesn't have any clearance and there's no way say, hell, this is top secret information. If he wants to use it, he can. It